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USSR: THIRD REACTOR AT CHERNOBYL MAY REMAIN SHUTDOWN ~~(S NF)~~:

[redacted] THE (b)(1) (b)(3)
CHAIRMAN OF THE SOVIET COMMISSION ON THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT RECENTLY STATED THAT CHERNOBYL REACTOR 3 MAY HAVE TO REMAIN SHUTDOWN BECAUSE OF THE RADIATION HAZARD. HIS REMARKS INDICATE THAT THE RESIDUAL RADIATION AT CHERNOBYL IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS AND THE RECOVERY FROM THE ACCIDENT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THAN THE SOVIETS HAVE STATED PUBLICLY. ~~(S NF)~~

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1. USSR: THIRD REACTOR AT CHERNOBYL MAY REMAIN SHUTDOWN (S NF):

[redacted] V. A. LEGASOV, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE KURCHATOV INSTITUTE OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND HEAD OF THE SOVIET COMMISSION ON THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT, DISCUSSED THE CURRENT SITUATION AT CHERNOBYL DURING A RECENT MEETING IN MOSCOW. ACCORDING TO LEGASOV, REACTORS 1 AND 2 ARE OPERATING, BUT THE FATE OF REACTOR 3 IS LESS CERTAIN. ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO RESTART THE THIRD REACTOR, THE RADIATION LEVEL FROM THE ADJACENT REACTOR 4 WOULD RESULT IN EXCESSIVE EXPOSURE TO PLANT WORKERS. LEGASOV SAID THAT RADIATION LEVELS ON TOP OF THE "ENTOMBMENT" OVER THE DESTROYED FOURTH REACTOR ARE SO HIGH THAT WORKERS CAN APPROACH NO CLOSER THAN 10 METERS. (S NF)

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HE ALSO SAID THAT THE SOVIETS ARE FACING A DIFFICULT CHOICE ON WHETHER TO REMOVE SEVERAL METERS OF TOPSOIL OVER MUCH OF THE SURROUNDING SEVERAL HUNDRED SQUARE KILOMETERS OF LAND TO ALLOW RESETTLEMENT OR TO LEAVE THE REGION UNINHABITED. (S NF)

COMMENT:

LEGASOV'S COMMENTS POINT TO MUCH MORE SERIOUS RESIDUAL RADIATION AT THE CHERNOBYL PLANT THAN THE SOVIETS HAVE PREVIOUSLY INDICATED. CLEARLY, THEY ARE EXPERIENCING MUCH GREATER DIFFICULTY IN RECOVERING FROM THE ACCIDENT THAN THEIR GLIB PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS INDICATE. (S NF)

THE SOVIETS' STATEMENTS UP TO THIS TIME HAVE AFFIRMED THEIR INTENTION TO RESTART THE THIRD REACTOR, BUT THE TIME FRAME FOR RESTART RECENTLY HAS BECOME MORE VAGUE. ABANDONING THE THIRD REACTOR WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE RECENT DECISION NOT TO COMPLETE THE UNFINISHED FIFTH AND SIXTH REACTORS AT CHERNOBYL BECAUSE OF RADIATION HAZARDS. (S NF)

THE SOVIETS ARE FINDING THAT THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN RETURNING THE CHERNOBYL PLANT TO A HABITABLE WORKPLACE REQUIRE A MUCH GREATER EFFORT THAN THEIR INITIAL EMERGENCY CLEANUP. LEGASOV'S DESCRIPTION OF THE RADIATION SITUATION ABOVE THE ENTOMBMENT OF THE FOURTH REACTOR INDICATES A VERY HIGH RADIATION FIELD. THIS RADIATION LEVEL CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH THE ORIGINAL SOVIET GOAL OF ABOUT 5 MILLI-ROENTGENS PER HOUR AT THAT LOCATION ANNOUNCED AT THE AUGUST 1986 CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY ON THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT. (S NF)

ALSO, THE SOVIETS RECENTLY HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN A FEW MONTHS AGO ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESETTLEMENT OF THE AREA AROUND CHERNOBYL. IF, AS LEGASOV'S STATEMENT IMPLIES, RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS HAVE PENETRATED THE SOIL TO A DEPTH OF SEVERAL METERS, THEN REMOVAL OF SOIL OVER SEVERAL HUNDRED SQUARE KILOMETERS IS NOT A FEASIBLE OPTION

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AND SIGNIFICANT RESETTLEMENT PROBABLY WILL NOT BE ATTEMPTED. (S NF)

THE PERMANENT LOSS OF TWO-THIRDS OF THE PLANNED GENERATING CAPACITY OF THE CHERNOBYL ATOMIC POWER STATION AND SOME OF THE SURROUNDING LAND WILL INCREASE THE COST OF THE ACCIDENT SIGNIFICANTLY. (S NF)
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